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Vaishali makes history, wins Candidates 2026

GM R Vaishali etched her name in the record books as she beat Kateryna Lagno and won the Women's Candidates 2026. She became the Women's World Championship Challenger and will face reigning world champion Ju Wenjun. She is also the second Indian woman after Koneru Humpy (2011) to feature in title match | MICHAL WALUSZA/FIDE

Delimitation: Oppn to vote down Constitution change

Bills to be debated in LS seek to expedite 33% women's reservation

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

AHEAD of the three-day special session of Parliament, Opposition parties decided to vote against the proposed Constitution amendment bill on delimitation, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge said on Wednesday. Top Opposition leaders had met at Kharge's residence here to discuss strategy on the women's reservation law and the proposed delimitation amendment.

Kharge stressed that the Opposition has always supported women's reservation in Parliament, but was concerned about the manner in which the bill is being brought. "It is politically motivated. Just to gag and suppress Opposition parties, the government is doing this," Kharge said after the meeting.

"We are continuously supporting women's reservation. We are insisting that the earlier amendment that was passed, be implemented. They (the BJP-led government) are playing tricks with delimitation. Therefore, all parties have taken a decision unitedly to oppose this bill," he added.

Besides Kharge and Rahul Gandhi, other leaders at the meeting included DMK's T R Baalu, RJD's Tejashwi Yadav, AAP's Sanjay Singh, Trinamool's Sagarika Ghosh, Shiv Sena (UBT)'s Sanjay Raut and Arvind Sawant, NCP-SCP's Supriya Sule, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav (joining virtually), CPI's Annie Raja, CPI-M's Nilotpal Basu, AAP leader Sanjay Singh, Independent MP Kapil Sibal, IUML's E T Mohd Bashir and RSP's N K Premchandran, apart from Congress general secretaries K C Venugopal and Jairam Ramesh.

Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge addresses the press after a meeting of Opposition leaders on the special Parliament session, in Delhi on Wednesday | SHEKHAR YADAV

Leaders from Kerala and Tamil Nadu said that the women's reservation Act should be implemented within the existing framework of 543 seats.

Later, in a video message, Rahul said the Congress will not allow the women's reservation bill to be implemented on the basis of the 2011 Census as there is no data on backward communities in it.

"Congress party unequivocally supports women's reservation. Parliament unanimously passed the bill in 2023, it is already part of our Constitution," he said, adding, "what the government is proposing now has nothing to do with women's reservation. This amendment is an attempted power grab using delimitation and gerrymandering."

"We will not allow 'Hissa Chori' from OBC, Dalit and Adivasi communities by ignoring the caste census data. We will also not allow Southern, North Eastern, North Western and smaller states to be treated unfairly," he warned.

Rahul cited his letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2018 in which he had demanded the implementation of the women's bill from the 2019 general elections. P11

18 hours of debate

LS's Business Advisory Committee has allocated 18 hours for the debate, which may run into Friday. Arjun Ram Meghwal will introduce two bills, while Amit Shah will introduce the third one

Indian delegation to visit US next week for talks on trade agreement

PUSHPITA DEY @ New Delhi

AN Indian delegation will be in the US from April 20 to 22 to take forward the negotiations on the proposed Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA), Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said on Wednesday.

This will be the first such in-person engagement between the two sides after the US Supreme Court struck down President Trump's reciprocal tariffs as illegal. The ruling had prompted both sides to recalibrate their positions ahead of the next round of talks.

"The negotiating teams will be meeting in person after a gap of about 3-4 months. They have been engaging virtually. We are looking at finalising the legal agreement, which is a logical follow-up of the joint statement released on 7th February," Agarwal said.

The BTA was initially to be signed by mid-March. But after the Supreme Court ruling, the Trump administration rolled back the 25% tariffs and announced a 10% tariff under Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974 on certain imports from all countries.

Meanwhile, India submitted its rebuttal to the US Trade Representative (USTR) on April 15 regarding Section 301 measures, a longstanding point of contention between the two countries. "The US has initiated investigations involving several countries. Both sides will sit together and discuss how these issues need to be structured and addressed," he said.

US-IRAN STANDOFF

Pak's Munir in Tehran to revive ceasefire talks

AGENCIES

AMID efforts to extend the ceasefire between the US and Iran, a Pakistani delegation led by Chief of the Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir reached Tehran on Wednesday, carrying a US message to the Iranian leadership.

Munir is accompanied by Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, the Inter-Services Public Relations, the media wing of the military, said in a statement.

DAY 47 WAR WATCH

Iran's state-run TV reported that the purpose of the visit is to deliver a US message to Iranian leadership and to plan the next round of negotiations.

In an interview that aired on Wednesday, Donald Trump said the war was "very close to over". Earlier, reports quoting regional officials said the two countries had reached an "in principle agreement" to extend the truce However, Washington has denied the reports. P13

Man hurls down paralysed mom from 4th floor

ENS @ Bengaluru

A 75-year-old paralysed woman was killed by her 42-year-old son who threw her from the fourth floor of a residential building in BEML Layout III Stage on Wednesday.

The deceased, Savithramma, had been bedridden for the past four years and was dependent on her son C Venkatesh. The police arrested Venkatesh following a complaint by building owner E Vikram.

In his complaint, Vikram stated that the accused lifted his mother from their second floor home to the fourth floor terrace and threw her down on Wednesday afternoon, and the woman died on the spot.

MLA Kulkarni, 16 others convicted in murder case

RAKSHITH GOWDA @ Bengaluru

FORMER minister and Congress MLA from Dharwad assembly constituency **Vinay Kulkarni** and 16 others were convicted on Wednesday in the 2016 murder of Zilla Panchayat member Yogesh Goudar. The quantum of punishment will be pronounced on Thursday. Kulkarni had given supari (contract) to the other convicts as he shared personal enmity and political rivalry with Goudar.

Judge Santhosh Gajanan Bhat of the Special Court for sitting and former MPs/MLAs, convicted the 17 accused on charges of murder, criminal conspiracy, causing disappearance of evidence or providing false information and others. However, the court acquitted Kulkarni and another accused, Chandrashekar Indi, of charges under the Arms Act. While 21 persons were named in the case, accused No. 1 Basavaraj and No. 17 Shivanand Shrishaila Biradar turned approvers. The court acquitted accused No. 20 Vasudev and No. 21 Somashekhar Nyamagoud, giving them the benefit of doubt. P4

EXPRESS READ

Cong suspends Jabbar

Davanagere: The Congress, which first forced MLC Abdul Jabbar to resign as KPCC Minority Cell president, on Wednesday suspended him from the primary membership of the party for anti-party activities during the bypolls at Davanagere South. P4

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